

TESTIMONY OF DIANE BAUGHN
March 30, 2011
Re: Senate Bill 1163
An Act Concerning Assault of A School Employee

Good afternoon Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Diane Baughn. I was a Special Education Teacher at Kennedy High School in Waterbury. For the sake of expediency, I would ask that you reference the February- March CEA Advisor (copies have been provided) as I am the cover story. In short, I was assaulted in my classroom in February of 2007. To date, I've had 5 surgeries and numerous procedures that encompass my head, cervical spine and shoulder. I have yet to return to work. My life is forever changed physically, emotionally and financially.

It is said "all is fair in love and war." Yet there is nothing fair about our teaching staff being terrorized by students, as we attempt to provide our youth with an optimum set of skills and knowledge. Ironically, the very staff that dedicates itself to educating our children is under attack. Along with the vast duties that we perform, we are now forced to police our classrooms and hallways.

Just as a trooper or firefighter, we put our lives on the line every single day. The days of respect for teaching staff are long gone. We are simply the next person in a string of others enforcing rules and seeking respect, which our nation's youth chooses to ignore. Sadly, violence against teachers is rarely about any significant issue. It is often over issues of dress code, turning off a cell phone, or being issued a pass to the lavatory. It is of epidemic proportions. Yet, everyday dedicated teachers rise each morning in the hopes that today they will make a difference and not become a statistic of assault.

I have been out of work for 4 years, yet the student who assaulted me wasn't arrested or even suspended. This student awakes every morning and continues his education. I awake each morning and pray that I will successfully shower without it being a two hour ordeal and that I can make it through noon without pain medication. He lives life each and every day. I have little life left to live. He leaves school and goes home. I have no classroom to go to and have lost my home. His life is unchanged; mine is unrecognizable and will never be the same.

While we must not leave any child behind, teachers and staff are being left behind at great numbers. While a student is entitled to a free appropriate public education, we as teachers are not entitled to a free and appropriate workplace. Sociologically, the infrastructure has changed, yet the laws have not followed. Students are being placed in classrooms where

educators are ill-equipped to handle the violence that follows. Support is at an all time low. Training is scarce and the individuals paying the price are our educators. We need protection under the law so that we can do our job in the safest manner possible. More importantly, a message needs to be sent that there is zero tolerance for assault on educational staff. It's a new day and the laws need to reflect appropriate modifications.

Today I ask you to protect our teaching staff to the fullest extent of the law. Since we must now police the hallways of knowledge, please allow us the right to press charges with the stiffest of penalties as we are assaulted in our workplace. Remove the onus from "a teacher pressing charges against a student" and transfer that onus to the police officer responding as seen in domestic violence cases.

Please support **Senate Bill 1163** and make it clear that "No Teacher will be left behind" and WE are entitled to a "Free Appropriate Public Educational Workplace."

Thank you.
